

John Ashcroft — The Best Man For the Job

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The following are recent quotes on President Bush's nomination of Senator John Ashcroft for the office of U.S. Attorney General. (Note: the previous version of this paper was issued on January 25.)

"(John) Ashcroft has not backed off any of his beliefs. He has just said he will do the job of the attorney general, which is to enforce whatever federal laws are on the books. That's how it should work in a free society. If there is something wrong with the laws, it is up to the legislative branch to repeal or correct them. It is not the job of the attorney general to ignore their violation. [...]

"... A moral man of integrity has no choice. Trust me, it will be an enormous improvement to have an attorney general who will enforce all the laws. [...]

"It really is puzzling to see how anyone could misconstrue Ashcroft's forthright statements that he would enforce the laws as either a change of his philosophy or a betrayal of his previous positions.

"Democratic liberals were faced with a dilemma. They wanted to vote against him, not because of any of his beliefs but simply to cater to the rabid and fanatic base of the Democratic Party ...

"Yet, they didn't want to admit to the normal people in their states that they were pandering to extremists. Hence, they raised the red herring that Ashcroft would not enforce laws with which he didn't agree.

"Ashcroft combated that tactic, and if some journalists are too unperceptive to see the game being played, well, that's not unusual.

"Voters, however, can mark down every vote against Ashcroft as irrefutable evidence of political opportunism and pandering to extremism. They then can ask themselves if they wish to be represented by people who place pandering to the worst elements of society ahead of truth and the rule of law."

(Charley Reese, The Orlando Sentinel, 1/30/01)

"(Sen. Charles) Schumer certainly got a taste of his own medicine — a la the John Ashcroft attorney general confirmation hearings — this past weekend when one of America's most powerful black businessmen accused the senator of racism.

"Robert Johnson — the founder, among other things, of Black Entertainment Television — said Schumer had blocked his attempt to create a minority-owned commuter airline meant to serve

upstate New York. Instead, the entrepreneur said, the senator went to bat for two non-minority-owned companies. { ... }

“ ‘... [P]erhaps it is because [the competing companies are run] by white business persons,’ Johnson suggested to Post State Editor Fredric U. Dicker over the weekend.

“Preposterous? Sure. Condescending? You betcha. But no more so than the confirmation grilling Ashcroft got from his former colleague a couple of weeks ago. { ... }

“Translated into simple English, Schumer was saying that because Ashcroft was so troubled by the judgment of a single African-American judge, his opposition to the jurist’s promotion to the federal bench amounted to racist behavior. { ... }

“Using that standard, Schumer’s failure to support Robert Johnson’s bid to provide commuter air service to Syracuse and environs amounted to — racist behavior. { ... }

“Actually, what Schumer had to say about Ashcroft was nonsense on stilts — and it certainly fails as a standard by which to judge the senior senator from New York.”

(New York Post, Editorial, 1/30/01)

“... What liberals are really trying to do is paint Mr. Ashcroft into a corner so that he will have to make liberal issues a priority rather than conservative ones. { ... }

“It is entirely fair to ask a prospective attorney general what his legal priorities will be, and how he interprets various federal statutes. It is hardly fair, or reasonable, to demand that a conservative nominee for attorney general promise to follow the liberal policies of the outgoing administration.

“Somehow, critics want ... Mr. Ashcroft to be Janet Reno in trousers. ... Bush policies are going to differ dramatically from Clinton policies; that is not a scandal, that’s politics. That’s also what Americans expect from a new administration.”

(Paul Clark, The Washington Times, 1/29/01)

“Ashcroft’s pro-life policy on protecting the unborn, while considered primitive in the salons of Manhattan and Georgetown, is mainstream politics in Missouri.”

(St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Editorial, 1/30/01)

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